

Denefield School

Mental Health Policy

Date of next review	April 2028
Review cycle	Triennial
Type of policy	Non statutory
Policy owner	Headteacher/Senior Mental Health Lead
Location of policy	Website

Status:

Non statutory

Policy statement:

“Mental health...is not a destination, but a process. It’s about how you drive, not where you’re going.” Noam Shpancer.

Denefield School endeavours to embed positive strategies for promoting wellbeing and good mental health into all that we do as per the WHO’s statement on mental health:

Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (World Health Organization)

Denefield strives to achieve this for all members of the community by carefully considering the impact of policies, actions and events on mental health and well-being and also by providing targeted support to members of the community where appropriate.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. In an average classroom, three children will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for students affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

Aim:

This document aims to layout Denefield’s approach to promoting positive mental health and well-being. It is designed for staff, trustees and any other interested parties.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our health and safety and safeguarding policies in cases where a student’s mental health overlaps with or is linked to a medical issue, safeguarding concern, and the SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) policy where a student has an identified special educational need or is on the child protection register.

The policy aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in all staff and students.
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues.
- Alert staff to early warning signs of mental ill health.
- Provide support to staff working with young people with mental health issues.
- Provide support to students suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents or carers.
- Outline legal considerations pertaining to minors and mental health.

Legal and statutory requirements:

This policy is based on the Equality Act (2010) and has regard to the Data Protection Act, the DfE's Keeping Children safe in Education, Denefield's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, Attendance policy and Behaviour and Discipline policy.

Under The Equality Act (2010) a person with a mental health difficulty is covered if their condition leads to an adverse impact on their ability to carry out their normal day-to-day activities. This will include students with conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder, self-harm and disordered eating.

The Act also covers those who have had a mental illness or difficulty in the past, even if they have recovered, and those whose condition meets the definition but is successfully controlled by treatment (for example psychiatric medication such as anti-depressants) or therapy.

Under The Equality Act, it is unlawful to discriminate against students with a diagnosed mental health condition, and 'reasonable adjustments' may need to be made to ensure they can access education. The general principal of 'reasonable adjustments' is that wherever possible, schools should make practical adjustments to enable a student to continue their education. Mental health problems are often variable and students may only need adjustments for a limited period of time whilst they receive treatment or until they are better able to function.

Under GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 all information regarding students with mental health difficulties is regarded as being special category data. Any and all information about student mental health is shared on a 'need to know' basis, and is aligned with defined procedures on sharing of information about students.

Duty of Care - All staff need to be aware of the concept of the 'Duty of Care'. This is a legal obligation which requires staff to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of all our students, staff and visitors. Where the school knows, or reasonably suspects, that a student is experiencing mental health difficulties, appropriate support and reasonable adjustments must be considered and safeguarding procedures followed where required.

What is meant by 'mental health difficulty'?

The term 'mental health' describes a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. A mental health difficulty is one in which a person is distracted or unable to engage with ordinary life due to upsetting, disturbing thoughts and/or feelings. These problems may distort or negatively impact a person's view of the world and produce a variety of symptoms and behaviour likely to cause distress and concern.

Mental Health Emergencies or Crises

A Mental Health Emergency or Crisis is defined as: 'A mental health crisis often means that you no longer feel able to cope or be in control of your situation. You may feel great emotional distress or anxiety, cannot cope with day-to-day life or work, think about suicide or self-harm, or experience hallucinations and hearing voices.' NHS, 2019.

There may be instances where a student's behaviour and mental state are concerning and may lead to immediate danger through harm to themselves or others. The following situations or symptoms classify as a mental health emergency:

- Self-harm (including overdoses)
- Suicidal ideation
- Hearing voices
- Psychosis: Experiencing hallucinations and/or delusions
- Extreme emotional distress

If a student presents with any of the above problems, relevant staff will go through the school safeguarding and first aid procedures to keep that child safe.

If the student requires being sent home or is advised to go to A&E, this will be directed by the DSL, Deputy DSL, Head of House or other member of senior staff and parents will be contacted (unless it is not safe to do so).

Mental health, attendance and early help

The school recognises that mental health difficulties may impact attendance and engagement with learning. Where mental health concerns are affecting attendance, early help and reasonable adjustments will be considered, in line with statutory attendance and safeguarding guidance. Any reduced or part-time timetable will be time-limited, reviewed regularly, and used only where it is in the best interests of the student

Roles and responsibilities:

The Trust Board:

Retains overall responsibility for health and safety in school but delegates operational matters to the Headteacher.

The Headteacher:

Is responsible for the implementation of this policy including:

- Oversight of the Mental Health Lead.
- Ensuring all staff are familiar with the safeguarding procedures.
- Undertaking, or ensuring that managers undertake, risk assessments, as appropriate, and that appropriate measures are put in place.
- Ensuring that staff have access to training as appropriate.

The Senior Mental Health Lead will:

Lead and oversee the school's whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing, including the Mental Health First Aiders programme.

- Provide advice and training to staff on mental health issues, including updates to policy and procedure.
- Liaise with the Heads of House, Welfare Team and DSLs about appropriate next steps.
- Review provision to assist with mental health and lead on new initiatives as appropriate.

The Guidance Team (Welfare Managers, Heads of House, Deputy Heads of House, the Medical Lead) will:

- Investigate and manage instances of reported mental ill health.
- Identify appropriate support strategies for pupils in mental health distress.
- Make further referrals as appropriate (such as CAMHS / No 5 / youth worker / Daisy's Dream, etc).

The SENDCO will:

- Work with the Welfare Team to put into place alternative provision as appropriate.
- Work with the Edison Team to provide alternative provision as appropriate.

All staff will:

- Remain alert to signs of mental ill health.
- Follow the school's safeguarding procedure to report concerns.
- Attend training as per the school's CPD programme.
- Incorporate discussion / material about mental health issues as appropriate in their teaching.
- Deliver the S4L (Success for Life) programme as per the scheme of work.

Tutors will:

- Deliver the Success for Life tutor curriculum as instructed by the PSHE / S4L lead or head of house / year.
- Build positive relationships with tutees so that they are best placed to identify early signs of mental ill health.
- Use the referral process to alert the Welfare Team if they have concerns.

Parents and Carers will:

- Seek advice from medical professionals if they have concerns about their child's mental health.
- Act upon any advice, support or guidance offered by any professionals.
- Make the school aware if they have any concerns regarding their child's mental health.
- Make the school aware if their child is suffering from mental ill health at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Make use of / follow up on the recommendations for seeking support offered by the school as appropriate.

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed regularly and will be updated in response to new guidance and/or legislation as necessary.

Links to: This policy links to:

- The Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- The Behaviour and Discipline policy
- The Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions policy
- The Attendance policy

Appendices: - Appendix 1:

Mental health – what to look out for:

Mental health crises or emergencies are often not spontaneous and the student may have been experiencing symptoms for a length of time. Therefore, it is essential that student mental health concerns are communicated to Welfare Team or DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) / Deputy DSL to ensure the school is focusing on preventative strategies, and is carefully monitoring and supporting vulnerable students.

Warning signs:

Students who are showing signs of mental distress do not always express problems directly or ask for help, even where there are clear signs that they are having difficulties and could be due to a number of reasons. Students may still feel stigma around mental health problems, or may be concerned about the consequences of telling someone. They may be unaware that they have a problem, or be aware but feel that they have to cope with it on their own.

Adolescence can be a difficult developmental time and this period of change can result in the gradual onset of mental illness. It is important that warning signs are recognised and an appropriate, supportive response is put in place as soon as possible. School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a student is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns to the Welfare Team / the DSL / Deputy DSL, following the school safeguarding procedure.

Possible warning signs include:

- The student has told you there is a problem, for example, they have been feeling low or anxious recently
- Significant changes in the student's appearance, for example: weight loss/gain, decline in personal hygiene, noticeable signs of self-harm
- Changes in mood, for example: mood is very up and down, miserable, tired, withdrawn
- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating patterns or sleeping habits
- Concerns expressed from friends, family, other staff members
- Changes in behaviour, academic achievement, extracurricular activity engagement, or among peers. For example, doing too much work, not socialising as much as usual, withdrawn, not attending school, being late or failure to meet deadlines
- Increased isolation from friends, family.
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Internet searches about self-harm, suicide, eating disorders etc.
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Skipping PE or getting changed secretly
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause.

Appendix 2:

School support for mental health

Internal support:

Denefield School aims provide a supportive environment for students, with a range of measures available to support mental health. This may include some or all of the following:

Listening email / drop box for worries – listening@denefield.org.uk

Ask to be referred to a MHFA (mental health first aider)

Speak to your tutor for peer mentor support

The school uses a range of strategies to help students build their resilience and to support students in crisis. The provision will be individually tailored to the student in question to ensure that the most appropriate support is offered.

Appendix 3:

External support/signposting:

Students experiencing mental health difficulties are often best supported with support both in and outside school. There are various mental health charities who provide helpful information for parents, and who offer tools to assist young people with their mental health outside school. The following resources can be helpful to review and are often signposted to students in school for support.

- school website – student wellbeing section (<https://www.denefield.org.uk/page/?title=Student+Wellbeing&pid=30>)
- GP – your local GP is usually the first person to contact regarding concerns about a child’s mental health.
- Tellmi – online app, free support for young people funded by the Local Authority / NHS.
- Childline – free counselling for young people via phone or online. 0800 1111
- CalmHarm.co.uk – free app to support those worried about self-harm
- ClearFear.co.uk – free app to support those who want to overcome anxiety
- Mind.org.uk – general mental health support and knowledge.
- YoungMinds.org.uk – general mental health support and knowledge.
- Samaritans – suicide phone-line (116 123)
- A&E – the NHS recommends that young people should attend A&E during a mental health crisis if: they have recently taken an overdose, they have ingested harmful liquids, they have cut themselves significantly (deep cut/s and/or are bleeding profusely), they have burns that are blistering or red, they have lost consciousness

Supporting Parents and Staff

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children’s emotional and mental health.

In order to support parents, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school website.
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to go about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child.
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents.

Parents and staff members may also struggle with their mental health. Caregiving and teaching can both be emotionally demanding jobs and it is important to ensure that care is taken around personal wellbeing. The following resources can be helpful for parents and staff members to support with their own mental health.

- GP – The NHS offers a variety of therapeutic interventions to assist with mental health problems.
- NHS.uk - <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/>
- The Wellbeing Trust offers a wealth of information, advice and links to further help <https://wellbeingtrust.org/resources/mental-health-resources/>
- The Employee Assistance Programme (for staff – see HR manager or your line manager for details).

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner where required by changes in legislation, statutory guidance or safeguarding practice.